THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
LIBRARY
NOV 5 1959
CHICAGO

FALL 1959 50c

U. OF
LIBRARY

Cover Design by Clark Fitz-Gerald

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

is published quarterly by the editors. Subscription rates are $1.75 for one year and $4.50 for three years. Manuscripts are solicited but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address all correspondence to: The Editors, The Beloit Poetry Journal, Box 2, Beloit, Wisconsin.
Editorial Board: Chad Walsh, Robert H. Glauber, David M. Stocking, Marion Kingston Stocking. Associates: Editorial — John Bennett; Art — Vernon Shaffer. Copyright, 1959, by The Beloit Poetry Journal. National Distributor: B. de Boer, Bloomfield, N.J.

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
Volume 10 - Number 1 Fall 1959

THE RETURN

We cross the bridge, the town is near ahead,
A patch of green against monotony
Of everlasting clay, against the old
A mend of new cloth; the steeple high
Penciled above it points like the finger
Of a compass to the heart of town.

It has changed, years have made shorter
The blocks I walked to school. Our house is gone,
Dormered windows and white columned porch
Have been replaced with metal casings and pink
Brick and since a year ago last March
It holds a rest home for the aged. I think

The young have moved from town. Only the river
Flows unchanged through sloping banks of red;
Unchanged, it changes with the seasons. Summer
Slows its flow, warms it to tepid,
It lulls the catfish into lazy sleep
While the water moccasins grow
Vigorous with the heat. On a slope
At Big Jake Crossing, forty years ago

This summer the Washita was spanned, a bridge
Connected bank to bank; the schism was healed
That had, as surely as a mountain ridge,
Divided our county. My father had observed
Through all his dreaming years, an orchard rare
As a waterfall in this prairie land,
Growing a river width away; that year
He rode across the bridge to pick a bride.

One winter, so near the Washita that river
Bottom poplars dropped their leaves on

Shingles of our frosted roof, my mother
Bore me, while poplars stood stripped of green,
Their long smoky limbs bare; and nuzzling
Its seed under bark, the mistletoe
Reached down its parasitic roots draining
Their sap. The river almost stopped its flow.

Spring swells it to bursting. I have seen
It overflow its shallow banks, carrying
Trees upended, all their long roots showing
Brown, while chunks of red mud still hold on.
It carried carcasses of pigs; I see
In nightmares yet, dead bodies thumping.
Receding to clear itself of flood debris
It runs cool and clean, good for swimming.

Around the bend from Big Jake where the bed
Flattens and the water forms a quiet
Pool, a month before the harvest of wheat
I stood in a white-clothed queue hearing the words
"Im Namen des Vaters des Sohnes und
Des Heiligen Geistes" until I heard them said

For me. Baptised, I scrambled drenched and clay
Stained to the bank, while the mocking-bird
Intruded its mimicry into the words
The congregation sang, "Gott ist die Liebe."
I was fifteen, I parroted the song
Wondering how I looked with my hair dripping.

This fall the same as others, the river runs
Red. Lined along its banks the poplars
Drop their leaves, the mistletoe gains lustre,
Virginia creeper frost-shocked to crimson
Holds its beauty one day before wind
Severs each leaf from the mother-vine.

Ruth Reimer Duke

IF DELIGHT BE SEVERED

1. If old delight be severed from
the leg that stamps, the toes
that tingle,
And all the tigers of the tanze
like troubadours are turned
to where those kingships mingle
Their praise for dying empires,
their love of pomp
with ladies in state chambers,
And like a trompe
the song is made mechanically
by falling matter;

If the ladies make their curtsies,
commence their chatter,
turn their powdered heads to view
The poet and the dance,
slowly nodding to the room,
and then they say:
"How interesting, that poet!
His song is interesting!
That dance . . ." but
Their eyes are called away
from the minuet,
the kermis and the cod,
(that is; the codpiece, but also see
OTHELLO, II, i, line 156,
and Iago, variously)
While kings and ladies and
the unacknowledged God
goes by chance.
And thus Romance.

2. Yes, Molly! and thus Romance

is your ambivalence;
it makes the only sense
When other sense has fled:
long for a wise man
but love a fool;
There's a handy tool to screw
an empty head
towards Eternity.

Or take Bob Newton, who
reads Renaissance so well
we would scarcely recognize this hell,
Needed we not Hell so much the more
than Newton's Marvelous whore,
and had therefore geared Babylon
So precisely
that every life
could know death nicely.

3. Oh, Yeats! I'm done; since
no more of those Irish joys.
Since Ellen Glasgow wrote
"An honorable end is the one thing
that cannot be taken
away from man,"
Clearly it can be taken from the boys.
Now no more attempts
to separate
The dancer from the dance:
it's accomplished:
the name's Romance,
And what was three
will no longer be
rolled into one.

Oh Yeats! Damn Ecstasy, I'm done!

James Hiner

ELIAS HICKS IS A HERETIC

"Country friends come to defy us!"
the Spielman said. "Yet all, we all stand or fall
on the Old Christ creed. Light of us all
and towered in His teaching.
What's this new preaching? Can words take His place?
Elias? No, I don't remember your face
—but you speak unregenerate Saul.
The silence is grace that you spoil.
You darken the meeting."

"I am His seed," said Elias.

"Firm is the Cleft-rock of the Christ!"
the Spielman thundered. "Your teaching descends,
your words are graven. Your farmer friends
bend to the weather, but God intends
absolute values. You buy, sell. But God has priced
by no almanac casting of markets and crops.
Hide in the Rock. Read firmly. No Christ-word drops
in nature's uncertainty."

"Seed must be sown," said Elias.

"All—or nothing! Quell your disquiet!"
the Spielman ranted. "Between us and God's wrath,
Christ is fortress. He *must* intercede.
Blood is on us. By His blood we are freed:
His is the power.
O do not deny us
assurance unfaltering, for steep is the path!
It is He who redeems, not the inner light.
Be strong in the Rock."

"The seed will root," said Elias.

Sam Bradley

VERSES FOR MY WIFE

St. Valentine's Day, 1959

You are still la belle—
despite the insidious years
corrosive of wonder, of all
surprise, despite the scars

of too many breakfasts,
too many cocktails,
consumed in silence, the waste
of small talk, the dull

surmise about who
said what, the price
for that, the anyhow
too often commonplace

invasions of solitude
or companionship —
when tired minds confide
our tiredness, perhaps

our boredom with the selves
we have permitted time
to make us, and all resolve
sickens, all becomes

empty gesture, two
actors playing poor
parts poorly and so
denying what we are.

Still, you are la belle,
more than wife or friend,
more than my mind or will
affirms, more than my hands

can touch—half dream,

half vision perhaps,
intangible as a name
which somehow escapes

the tongue. Still, you are
what I never quite
possess, however near
when in the absolute

and desperate dark I face
your naked flesh—in lust,
in furious tenderness,
in sudden hope, at last

in rage which coldly lets
our bodies' transport, then
disjunct and separate,
twist and writhe between

ourselves, as if the rack
whereon our bodies strain
yet might force or trick
the self beneath the skin.

Still, la belle, you are
la belle, inviolate
and whole, yourself entire,
more than daylight

reveals, if something less
than dreams. I turn again
and again to this, this
something more than—

whatever it is it is.
I turn, certainly not
compelled by legalities
or pity (that substitute

for love) or habit's itch.

Not for these I try
to stifle the selves I watch
myself become when now

another's voice or glance
may strike a note unstruck
by you or struck but once
or twice. No, awake

and uncompelled, I turn
half dazzled, half
resigned to what was born
with you—my present self.

E. P. Bollier

PLATO, ESQ.

Dear sir: I am but one of many
That waste your treasures bright and bonny,
Yet thank you most for that one penny
So didascalic:
Expulsion without ceremony
From your Republic.

I know, you settled all poor rhetors
Long since for mixing with our betters
And poking into sundry matters
Where we'd no business;
The Ideal Form, you said, would get us
Where we sought is-ness.

But see, we've such a deal of sense
Tingling in circumambience
That silence were the base offense
To simple being.
Simple? Aie, we make no pretence
To be all-seeing.

Maybe we *would* have hurt your wards,
Or some of us. A choice of bards
Is none or all: If you use swords
For your gymnastics
You may get cut, and so with words—
Odes and acrostics.

Beyond this, you aim at that level
Of goodness where men cast the devil
Out of their hearts, as you might stifle
Your inborn poet.
But who in ignorance of evil
Could ever do it?

Is this then where we play our part,
Analyzing your inmost heart
To show it all? For such is art;
And such our thesis:
Just useful wisdom for a start
In anamnesis.

We're out. But we've the better of it,
Master, not just because we covet
The chance to sing, though some approve it
And most demand it;
But flesh and blood is all our profit—
We couldn't stand it.

Where shall we start but with this body,
This scrap of mind with which to study
The separate senses, sweet and bawdy,
To find fulfillment?
Granted, free souls are not so tidy
As in concealment.

A man—is it not so?—is lost
In launching, on strange currents tossed
All topsy-turvy. Yet we trust
We shall discover

What must be, sailing as we must
And wheresoever.

Love, you rejoin, conducts to knowledge.
Ah, that's the talk will give us courage:
Lord Eros sets up keeping college
To educate us.
Who fails to know in that near image
The real afflatus?

But next you hint we must make quorum
Among ourselves! a sterile forum,
"Pure" youths to bait a spectral theorem,
Bread on the waters;
Sir, take the sons, you're welcome to 'em,
Give us the daughters.

You pose a realm of pure idea,
Of phantom form, like Mother Gaea
Subsuming Molly by aporrhoea
In cosy Dublin,
So Moll, becoming, might yet be a
Decent hobgoblin.

Sir, words and girls both run to ruin
If left alone, it's their undoin'
And yours, I fear—*Republic, Ion,*
Dear twittle-twattle.
Being in form? That's use, that's screwin'
(See Aristotle).

You stick yourself, sir. Who discerns
That *hupsos*—phrase and image—learns
Partly why one clodhopper turns
Here to address ye
I' the crambo-clink o' Robin Burns,
An' sae God bless ye.

Hayden Carruth

THREE BRAZILIAN POETS

Introduction

In Rio de Janeiro today live three of the finest modern poets in the Western World: Manuel Bandeira (b. 1886), Cecilia Meireles (b. 1901), and Carlos Drummond de Andrade (b. 1902).

Manuel Bandeira, of whom Vinicius de Morais (author of the prize-winning ORFEU NEGRO at the 1959 Cannes Film Festival) has said: "You were a star in my exile"—is the permanent secretary of the Brazilian Academy, close friend of Mexican poet Alfonso Reyes, and the most important voice in the first phase of Brazilian Modernism. Professor of his nation's literature at the University of Brazil, haunter of the bookstores in Rio, Bandeira speaks with the greatest critical authority to his countrymen. His age, his prestige, his immense impact upon Brazilian letters over the past forty years—all make Manuel Bandeira the T. S. Eliot of Portuguese America.

Cecilia Meireles, beautiful and gracious wife of Heitor Grillo, is the best woman poet in the Portuguese language. Close friend of the late Chilean Nobel Prize winner Gabriela Mistral, twice nominated for the Nobel Prize herself, held in very high esteem in South America, in the Latin countries of Europe, and in India—Cecilia Meireles, in the words of Bandeira, is not a **poetess**, but a great **poet**: worthy peer of Bandeira himself and of Carlos Drummond. The most independent of all Brazilian poets, Cecelia Meireles has fashioned her own world of art apart from the impact of the revolution into Modernism; at her best, she creates that kind of poetic hypnosis associated with John Keats.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, idol of young Brazilian poets and intellectuals, is the most important voice in the second phase of Brazilian Modernism. He is the high priest of the socio-political poetry that started flowing in 1930. An expert archivist in the Ministry of Education, Drummond makes his influence felt in several critical articles a week on any and all subjects that he feels demand his attention. At present writing new poems for his grandchildren, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, in the opinion of many of Brazil's leading literati, is perhaps the most intelligent and compassionate poet on this vast half-continent.

I wish to thank Antonio Candido de Melo e Souza, Decio de Almeida Prado, and Ruy Coelho for their help in selecting some of these poems for translation for THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL; the poets themselves for reading the translations for any possible misinterpretations; Joao Fonseca, who helped me translate from Bandeira; and above all, Yolanda Leite, who has worked with me constantly until a project on three poets has turned into one on fifteen.

John Nist

Sao Paulo, Brazil
4 July 1959

SEVEN POEMS BY MANUEL BANDEIRA

Translated by John Nist

Pneumothorax

Fever, lung-coughing blood, gasping, and night-sweats.
A whole life that could have been, but was not.
Cough, cough, cough.

He sent for the doctor:
—Say thirty-three.
—Thirty-three . . . thirty-three . . . thirty-three . . .
—Breathe.

. . . . . .

—You have a hole in the left lung and seepage into the right.
—Well, doctor, isn't it possible to try a pneumothorax?
—No. The only thing you can do is play an Argentine tango.

Absolute Death

To die.
To die body and soul.
Completely.

To die without leaving the sad remains of flesh,
Without leaving the bloodless mask of wax,
Surrounded by flowers,
Which will rot away—so happy!—one day,
Bathed in tears
Born less from grief than from the shock of death.

To die without leaving perhaps even a pilgrim soul . . .
On the way to heaven?
But what heaven can fulfill your dream of heaven?

To die without leaving a furrow, a trace, a shadow,
Without leaving even the remembrance of a shadow
In any human heart, in any human thought,
In any human skin.

To die so completely
That one day when somebody sees your name on a page
He will ask: "Who was he? . . ."
To die still more completely:
Without leaving even this name.

Apple

From one angle I see you just like a dried-up breast
From another just like a belly from whose navel
still hangs the umbilical cord

You are red as the divine love

Inside you in the little seeds
Palpitates a prodigious life
Infinitely

And you remain so simple
Beside a knife
In a poor hotel room.

Roundel of the Little Horses

The little horses running,
And we, the big horses, eating . . .
And your beauty, Esmeralda,
Finally drove me mad.

The little horses running,
And we, the big horses, eating . . .
And the sun outside so bright,
But in my heart night is falling.

The little horses running,
And we, the big horses, eating . . .
Alfonso Reyes going away,
And so many people staying behind.

The little horses running,
And we, the big horses, eating . . .
Italy bragging and bullying,
And Europe coming apart at the seams . . .

The little horses running,
And we, the big horses, eating . . .
Brazil busy politicking,
My God! Poetry dying . . .
And the sun outside so bright,
And the sun so bright, Esmeralda,
But in my heart—night is falling!

Poetica

I am sick of limited lyricism
Of well-behaved lyricism
Of public-servant lyricism
With its time-clock card
And its clerkly protocol
And its ass-kissing flattery of the boss.

I am sick of halting lyricism
That has to look up in the dictionary
The vernacular meaning of a word.

Down with the purists!

I want all the words
Chiefly the universal barbarisms
I want all the constructions
Chiefly the syntactical ones of exception
I want all the rhythms
Chiefly the unnumbered.

I am sick of flirting lyricism
Of political lyricism
Of rickety lyricism
Of syphilitic lyricism
Of all lyricism which surrenders
To anything which is not its true self.

After all, that is not lyricism
That is only bookkeeping
A table of co-sines
A handbook for the perfect lover
With a hundred models of letters
And the different ways to please the ladies.

I prefer the lyricism of madmen
The lyricism of drunkards
The difficult and poignant lyricism of drunkards
The lyricism of Shakespeare's fools.

I will have nothing more to do
With a lyricism which is not freedom.

I am Going Away to Pasargada

I am going away to Pasargada
There I am friend of the king
There I have the woman I want
On the bed that I shall choose
I am going away to Pasargada.

I am going away to Pasargada
Here I am not happy
There life is an adventure
In such a non-mattering way
There life is an adventure
That Joan the Mad Woman of Spain
Queen and pretended insane
Is relative once removed
From the daughter-in-law I never had.

And how I will exercise!
I will pedal the bicycle!
I will ride the wild ass!
I will climb the greased pole!
I will bathe in the sea!
And when I am tired
I will lie on the banks of the river
And call the nymph of the water
To tell me the stories
That Rose used to tell me
When I was a boy
I am going away to Pasargada.

There's everything in Pasargada
It's another civilization:

It has a safe and sure way
To prevent knocking the girls up
It has automatic telephone
It has plenty of dope
It has beautiful prostitutes
For one to make love to.

And when I become sadder
So sad that I have no more hope
And when in the night it comes
The desire to kill myself
—Ah, there I am friend of the king—
Then I have the woman I want
On the bed that I shall choose
I am going away to Pasargada.

Last Song of the Dead End

Dead End which I sang in a couplet
Full of mental ellipses,
Dead End of my sorrows,
Of my doubts and my fears
(But also of my loves,
Of my kisses, of my dreams),
Goodbye, goodbye forever!

They are going to tear down this house,
But my room will remain,
Not like an imperfect form
In this world of appearances:
It will remain in eternity,
With its books, with its pictures,
Intact, suspended in air!

Dead End of the evergreen thorn,
Of the passions with no tomorrows,

How much Mediterranean light
Did not the dew of the wee hours
Did not the purity of the mornings
Harvest upon these stones
With the shining of adolescence!

Dead End of my sorrows,
I am not ashamed of you!
Were you a street of the whores?
They are all daughters of God!
And before them there were the nuns . . .
And you belonged to the poor only
When, poor myself, I came to live here.

Lapa—Lapa do Desterro—,
Lapa which sins so much!
(But when six o'clock strikes,
In the first voice of the bells,
What angelic graces you have:
Like in that voice which announced
To Mary the conception of Christ!)

Our Lady of Carmel,
There from the height of the altar,
Is begging for alms for the poor—
For all the sad women,
For all the black women,
Who come at night to seek shelter
In the doorways of the church.

Dead End born in the shadows
Of the stone walls of convents,
You are life, life which is holy
No matter how many its falls.
For this I love you always,
And I sing to you to say:
Goodbye, goodbye forever!

Manuel Bandeira

NINE POEMS BY CECILIA MEIRELES

Translated by John Nist

Introduction

Here is my life:
This sand so clear
With drawings that walk
Dedicated to the wind . . .

Here is my voice:
This empty shell
The shadow of a sound
Preserving its own lament . . .

Here is my grief:
This broken coral
Surviving its pathetic moment . . .

Here is my heritage:
This solitary sea—
On one side it was love
And on the other forgetfulness.

Portrait

I did not have this face of today
So calm
So sad
So thin.

Nor these eyes so empty
Nor this bitter mouth.

I did not have these strengthless hands
So still
And cold
And dead.

I did not have this heart
That does not even show itself.

I did not realize this change
So simple
So certain
So easy.

In what mirror did I lose my face?

Motive

I sing because the moment exists
And my life is complete.
I am not gay, I am not sad:
I am a poet.

Brother of fugitive things,
I feel no delight or torment.
I cross nights and days
In the wind.

Whether I destroy or build,
Whether I persist or disperse,
—I don't know, I don't know.
I don't know if I stay or go.

I know that I sing.
The song is everything.
The rhythmic wing has eternal blood,
And I know that one day I shall be dumb:
—Nothing more.

Guitar

Silver dagger you were,
Silver dagger!
It was not you who made
Such a fool of my hand.

I saw you shining among stones,
Silver dagger!
On your handle, blooming flowers,
On your blade, the exact measure,

The exact, the precise measure,
Silver dagger,
To cut through to my heart
With an initial and a date.

The greatest pain I have,
Silver dagger,
Is not to see me dying,
But to know who is killing me.

The Roosters Will Crow

The roosters will crow when we die,
And a soft breeze, with delicate hands,
Will touch the fringes, the silken
Shrouds.

And the sleep of night will cloud
The clear windows.

And the crickets, far off, will saw silences:
Stalks of crystal, cold long solitudes,
And the enormous perfume of trees.

Ah, what sweet moon will look upon our calm face,

Even yet more calm than her great mirror
Of silver.

What thick freshness upon our hair,
As free as the fields at sunrise.

From the mist of dawn,
One last star
Will ascend: pale.

What immense peace, without human voice,
Without the lip of wolfish faces,
Without hatred, without love, without anything!

Like dark lost prophets,
Only the dogs will talk through the valleys.
Strong questions. Vast pauses.

We shall lie in death
In that soft contour
Of a shell in the water.

Pastoral

Here is the tiny shepherd,
much smaller than his flock,
watching, timid and careful,
the sunset in the field,
hugging the little lamb
like a brother his own size.

His eyes are, in the silence,
more than a shepherd's—a saint's.

The blue and green horizon
is turning violet and red,
and all the clouds disappear,

and a star comes on
—to take away that boy
who is leading his flock.

Museum

Since the lords are already dead
and cannot fight any more,
their armored plates, with regret,
have sat them down to the game.

On the chessboard there the horses,
the towers, the soldiers, the king . . . A hand
of iron can almost reach to play;
it lacks only the articulation.

O briefly squared plain
of the chessboard!
Visors lonesome for blood,
for wars which time has undone.

O unsatisfied ghosts
of the lords who are no more!
How much of death, without wars,
you, beyond all wars, now engage!

The Archangel

The voice of the Archangel falls.

(From the top of colored towers,
among arrows and stained windows;
from the top of minarets; from the top
of Gothic steeples; from the height

of curved domes; from the fine
Golden Crescent; from the large
baroque belfries; from these
cold jesuitical triangles;
from the arms of the crosses; from the clouds,
from the trees, from the jet of water,
from the doves' wings, from the little
corolla of the frail anemone . . .)

The voice of the invisible Archangel falls.
Lonesome.
Solitary.

(Tell me if you have ever heard it,
thus: far off, full of sorrow, centuries old.)

The Gates of Midnight

The angels come to open the gates of midnight,
at that very moment when sleep is deepest
and silence most pervasive.

The gates wheel open and unexpectedly we sigh.

The angels come with their golden music,
their tunics billowing with celestial breezes,
and they sing in their fluid incomprehensible tongue.

Then the trees burst forth with blossoms and fruit,
the moon and the sun intertwine their beams,
the rainbow unwinds its ribbons
and all the animals appear,
mingled with the stars.

The angels come to open the gates of midnight.

And we understand that there is no more time,

that this is the last vision,
that our hands are already lifted for goodbyes,
that our feet at last are freed from the earth,
freed for that flight, announced and dreamed
since the beginning of births.

The angels extend us their divine invitations.
And we dream that we are no longer dreaming.

Cecilia Meireles

EIGHT POEMS BY CARLOS DRUMMOND

Translated by John Nist

Pathetic Poem

What kind of noise is that on the stairs?
It is love coming to an end,
It is the man who closed the door
And hanged himself in the curtains.

What kind of noise is that on the stairs?
It is Guiomar who covered her eyes
And blew her nose fortissimo.
It is the still moon upon the plates
And the cutlery shining in the pantry.

What kind of noise is that on the stairs?
It is the dripping of the water faucet,
It is the inaudible lament
Of someone who has lost his gamble

While the music of the band
Goes down, down, down.

What kind of noise is that on the stairs?
It is the virgin with a trombone,
The child with a drum,
The bishop with a bell,
And someone who pianissimos the noise
Which jumps from my heart.

Secret

You cannot communicate poetry.
Keep still in your corner.
Do not love.

I hear that there is shooting
Within reach of our body.
Is it a revolution? is it love?
Say nothing.

Everything is possible, only I am impossible.
The sea overflows with fish.
There are men who walk on the sea
As though they walked in the street.
Do not tell.

Suppose that an angel of fire
Swept the face of the earth
And the sacrificed men
Asked for mercy.
Beg nothing.

Sadness in Heaven

In heaven also there is a melancholy hour.
A difficult hour, when doubt invades the souls.
Why did I make the world? God wonders
And answers: I do not know.

The angels look at Him in disapproval.
Their feathers fall.

All the hypotheses: grace, eternity, love
Fall. They are feathers.

One feather more, and heaven is undone.
So quiet, no breaking noise tells
The moment between everything and nothing.
That is to say, the sadness of God.

The Ox

O solitude of the ox in the field,
O solitude of man in the street!
Amid cars, trains, telephones,
Amid screams, the profound aloneness.

O solitude of the ox in the field,
O millions suffering without a curse!
Whether it is night or day makes no difference,
Darkness breaks up with the dawn.

O solitude of the ox in the field,
Men writhing without a word!
The city cannot be explained
And the houses have no meaning.

O solitude of the ox in the field!
The ghost ship passes
Silently through the crowded street.

If a love storm should blow up!
The hands clasped, the life saved . . .
But the weather is steady. The ox is alone.
In the immense field: the oil derrick.

The Dirty Hand

My hand is dirty.
I must cut it off.
Useless to wash it.
The water is rotten.
Or to soap it.
The soap is no good.
The hand has been dirty
For many many years.

At first hidden
In the pocket of my trousers,
Who would know it?
People used to call me,
Offering me their hand.
Hard, I refused.
The hidden hand
Would spread its dark
Track through my body.
And I saw it was the same
To use it or put it away.
The disgust was the same.

Ah, how many nights
Way back in my house
I washed this hand,
I scrubbed it, I scoured it!
For greater contrast,
I wished I could turn it

Into crystal or diamond,
Or even, at last,
Into a simple white hand,
The clean hand of a man,
Which you could hold
And lift to your lips
Or clasp in your own
In one of those moments
When two people confess
Without saying a word . . .
The incurable hand
Opened its dirty fingers.

It was a filthy dirt,
Not dirt of earth,
Not dirt of coal,
Not dirt of a scab,
Not sweat of a shirt
Of one who has worked.
It was a sad dirt
Made from disease
And from mortal anguish
In the disgusted skin.
It was not black dirt—
The black so pure
In a white thing.
It was gray-brown dirt,
Gray-brown, dull, thistle.

Useless to keep
The ignoble dirty hand
Lying upon the table.
Quick, cut it off,
Cut it into pieces
And throw it into the sea!
With time, with hope
And its machinery,
Another hand will come,

Pure—transparent—,
And fasten itself to my arm.

Search for Poetry

Do not make verses about happenings.
For poetry there is no creation or death.
In her eyes, life is an unmoving sun,
Which neither warms nor lights.
The attractions, the anniversaries, the personal incidents do not matter.
Do not make poetry with the body.
This excellent, complete and comfortable body, so unfit for lyrical flow.
Your drop of gall, your face-making of pleasure or of pain in the dark
Are of no account.
Do not tell me your feelings,
Which capitalize on ambiguity and attempt the long journey.
What you think and feel, that is not yet poetry.

Do not sing your city, leave it alone.
The song is not the movement of the machines or the secret of the houses.
It is not music heard in passing; nor the sound of the sea in the streets near the edge of spume.
The song is not nature
Or men in society.
For it, rain and night, fatigue and hope mean nothing.
Poetry (do not make poetry out of things)
Eliminates subject and object.

Do not dramatize, do not invoke,
Do not investigate. Do not waste time telling lies.
Do not be anxious.

Your ivory yacht, your diamond shoe,
Your mazurkas and superstitions, your family skeletons
Disappear in the curve of time, they are worthless.

Do not resurrect
Your buried and melancholy childhood.
Do not oscillate between the mirror
And your fading memory.
If it faded, it was not poetry.
If it broke, it was not crystal.

Penetrate deftly the kingdom of words:
Here lie the poems that wait to be written.
They are paralyzed, but not in despair,
All is calm and freshness on the untouched surface.
Here they are alone and dumb, in the state of the dictionary.
Before you write them, live with your poems.
If they are obscure, be patient. If they provoke you, hold your temper.
Wait for each one to actualize and to consume itself
In the power of language
And the power of silence.
Do not force the poem to come out of Limbo.
Do not pick from the ground the poem that was lost.
Do not flatter the poem. Accept it
As it will accept its own form, final and concentrated
In space.

Come closer and contemplate the words.
Each one
Has a thousand secret faces under a neutral face
And asks you, without interest in the answer,
Poor or terrible, which you will give it:
Have you brought the key?

Please note:
Barren of melody and meaning,

The words have taken refuge in the night.
Still humid and saturated with sleep,
They roll in a difficult river and turn themselves
into despising.

Dawn

The poet was drunk in a streetcar.
Day was dawning behind the backyards.
The gay boarding houses were sleeping most sadly.
The houses also were drunk.

Everything was beyond repair.
Nobody knew the world was going to end
(Only a child guessed it but kept silent),
That the world was going to end at 7:45.
Last thoughts! final telegrams!
Joseph, who had mastered his pronouns,
Helen, who loved men,
Sebastian, who was bankrupting himself,
Arthur, who said nothing,
Set sail for eternity.

The poet is drunk, but
He listens to an invitation in the dawn:
Shall we all go dancing
Between the streetcar and the tree?

Between the streetcar and the tree
Dance, my brothers!
Although there is no music
Dance, my brothers!

Children are being born
With such spontaneity.
How marvelous is love
(Love and other products).

Dance, my brothers!
Death will come later,
Like a sacrament.

Aspiration

I do not want any longer the maternal adoration
Which finally exhausts us and then flashes in panic,
Neither do I want the feeling of a precious find
Like that of Katherine Kippenburg at the feet of
Rilke.

And I do not want the love, under silly disguises,
Of that same nymph desolate in her hermitage,
Nor the constant search of thirst rather than of
lymph,
And neither do I want the simple rose of sex,

Hidden, meaningless, in the hostels of the wind,
Just as I do not want the geometric friendship
Of souls who elected one another in a proud cultiva-
tion,
An overlapping, perhaps? of melancholy needs.

I aspire rather to a faithful indifference
But poised enough to sustain life
And, in its indiscrimination of cruelty and diamond,
Able to suggest the end without the injustice of
prizes.

Carlos Drummond

ABEL

A Masque in a Kaleidoscope

Fyrst a songe of Abell

I only came up from the country
To spend a couple of nights;
Now I've been here for almost a year,
Waiting my last rites.

Here takyt Abell hys wey bynethe the cytee

In the shrouding mist
The chilly buildings
Scrape the cocaine sky
Like icebergs. I
Watch them float,
Remote, listing
First to starboard
Then to port.

Halfway down the subway stairs
I pass a face
I recognize.
It winks.
Cain, I cry.
My invocation
Rattles underground;
He disappears in light.

The rumpled parchment ghosts
Burrowing electrified
Beneath the asphalt
Are formally arranged
Like mortuary flowers.

Downtown
The ashen buildings

Lean sepulchral
And akimbo
Against the cinder sun.

A songe of Abell

The macadam is hard
In every back yard;
How do they bury their dead?

Do they use a jackhammer
Or an iron sledgehammer;
How do they bury their dead?

God, the gravedigger's pay
Must be three bucks a day;
How do they bury their dead?

Here entyr Abell to the theatre

I slouch in popcorn darkness
Waiting for the cock to crow
And history to start anew.

Soon the latest revolution
Spills black blood
And water skiers schuss the Everglades:
Some president ascends a rostrum,
A doberman wins best of show.

Then I slouch again
To nod while paranoids
Escape San Quentin,
To doze away the trials
Of ginghamed Emmy Lou,
Waiting for the cock to crow
And history to start anew.

A songe of Abell

If you can't spare a dollar, how bout a lousy
dime;
If you can't spare a dollar, how bout a lousy
dime;
She closes at three-thirty; that don't give me
much time.

Baby, hear me knocking; come on let me in;
Baby, hear me knocking; come on let me in;
If you let me in this one time, I won't come back
again.

There ain't a damn tree standing in this whole
lonesome town;
There ain't a damn tree standing in this whole
lonesome town;
Take your hachet, Baby, and chop my cherry
tree down.

Here goth Abell to a fayre

The carrousel is reeling,
Everything is going round and round.
My wooden horse
Plunges like a centaur
To the wild calliope.

Here for chocolate cherries
I slaughter flocks of leaden ducks
Clanking iron orbits on enamel ponds.
And here, for grinning kewpie dolls
I smash up brittle crockery
With sawdust dimestore balls.

I clump inside a maze of mirrors
On foreshortened stumps.
My arms elongate and distend.

A barker's cry, rasping
Through the cardboard walls
Hawks The Human Torso,
Marie, who swallows flaming swords,
The fatman and the midget, man and wife.

In her oracular tent,
Madam Lafarge,
Girdled by the zodiac,
Consults the stars,
Traces the lifeline of my palm,
Peers into her crystal ball.
She conjures up dark ladies
And prophesies an ocean voyage.

The girdered ferris wheel
Skeletons above the crowd.
The steel cage rolls me up and up
And I go over and around
To hang in nowhere
Dangling over nothing.

The songe of Cayns woman

I am the Madam of Bedlam,
Her Highness, Madam Brocade;
I rent on the lay away basis,
And do a flourishing trade.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

Duncan Hines has approved me
So all my ladies are staid;
3 of 4 doctors endorse me,
And all of my ladies are spayed.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

And all are guaranteed shockproof,
And all have been wormed and sprayed;
Their tears won't run when you kiss them,

And cherry red won't fade.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

Dian's in her crib with her teddy,
She is really no longer afraid;
Jill lies down with the Ripper,
One on each side of his blade.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

My cuisine is simply exquisite,
I serve green lemonade,
Crumpets at four in the morning
With potassium marmalade.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

I exercise business acumen
To get my expenses defrayed;
I pacify bulls with $3 bills
And stash them upstairs when they're paid.
Sing, *Tenderloin, tenderloin*

Here resort Abell to a taverner, seyynge hys tale of Eden

The neon sign
Said ENTER so
I did. The guy
Behind the bar
Was a good joe

So I put my
Foot on the rail,
Bent my elbow,
And started to spill
My maudlin tale.

Every morning at four
I'd knock three times
on my girl's barn door,

and we'd play seven card stud,
up and down the river,
spit in the ocean,
and low hole card wild
in her hayloft.
My best friends
dropped up too.
The coati-mundi ,
who dealt left handed,
was apt to bet
all his stars on aces-up.
The roc, who talked
and talked and talked
about running for alderman,
played conservatively
and only backed a sure thing.
I always dropped out
when he bet more than three moons.
The echidna munched cough drops
and bluffed a lot.
I was lucky as hell,
liked inside straights
and would even draw two to a flush.
My girl sat in the hay and smiled.
At exactly 6:45,
I folded up the sky
And put all the stars and moons
Back in the box.
Then the coati-mundi,
The roc, and the echidna
Would all head for their stalls,
And I would pull down the clouds
And take my girl to bed.

At story's end,
Joe, the nice guy
Behind the bar,
Poured down a neat

Shot of cheap rye,

Said, Bud, that's a
Pretty filthy
Story and threw
Me in the street
On hands and knees.

The songe of Cayn

Let the son of a bitch find his own goddamn
undertaker.
Am I my brother's keeper?

Here com Abell with all the pepull

I ferry down the concrete river
On the backs of grinning centaurs.
Alderman Roc leads the parade.
Marie floats by, belching smoke.
Ghosts stand in the gutter
Reading their obituaries
Flashed in neon from the ferris wheel.
And then I see him sitting on the curb.
I pray you, Brother, let me die.
He winks.

And goes on gnawing at the jawbone of his
ass.

Last a songe of Abell

I only came up from the country
To spend a couple of nights;
Now I'll be here for hundreds of years,
Waiting my last rites.

James C. Waugh

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
Volume 10 - Number 1 - Fall 1959

CONTENTS

1 RUTH REIMER DUKE *The Return*
3 JAMES HINER *If Delight Be Severed*
5 SAM BRADLEY *Elias Hicks Is a Heretic*
6 E. P. BOLLIER *Verses for My Wife*
8 HAYDEN CARRUTH *Plato, Esq.*
10 JOHN NIST *Introduction to Three Brazilian Poets*
12 MANUEL BANDEIRA *Seven Poems*
19 CECILIA MEIRELES *Nine Poems*
25 CARLOS DRUMMOND *Eight Poems*
34 JAMES C. WAUGH *Abel*